

very satisfying measure. Because of his passion for detail and his well-known affection for early printing, Mr. Faye's list itself includes numerous helpful notes to distinguish the Illinois copy of variant editions. The larger part of this "Note," however, is devoted to a thoughtful consideration of the need for more complete identification of the incunabula and the place of the cataloger in this process.

It is the conviction of Mr. Faye, and he documents his case, that insufficient work has often resulted in false or, at best, inept listings of early printed works. His complaints are grouped under two heads, "Authorship" and "Identification of Texts." The problem of authorship has long been with us, and Mr. Faye's complaint on this score is a common one. His contributions here lie chiefly in his indications of a possibly more productive method of attack and in references to new sources of information. His proposals for better identification of texts essentially represent the fusion of some of the accepted methods of paleography with what is fundamentally typographical research in a product appropriately called paleotypography. Under his system, an incunabulum should be confronted with an accepted modern edition, and verification made of *content*, if not page by page, at least by chapters or parts. The acceptance of the modern established text would require universal agreement, but it is the feeling of Mr. Faye that compilations like the *Thesaurus Linguae Latinae* or the *Patrologia Latina* have adequate acceptance for comparison. Admittedly, it will be impossible to find contemporary models for comparison of some incunabula, and in such cases,

the internal evidence of the text will have to be accepted.

The delicate point of the proposal is the line of demarcation (if one such exists) between the potential capabilities of a cataloger and those of a literary researcher in establishing the identity of a text, or possibly even the authenticity of a text. Mr. Faye is eminently well fitted for research work in this field, and if all catalogers were equally well equipped with languages and his kind of experience, there might well be no need to draw an artificial line. Unfortunately the vast majority of our trained catalogers are not at all equipped in this fashion, and we cannot hope for a very great change in this field. There is certainly some possibility, however, of improving the identification of incunabula by the methods proposed. It was implicit in all previous checklists of incunabula, and it is implicit in this list that the field is relatively small and a major project covering the whole field would still not be inconceivable. What Mr. Faye wants is to have all incunabula positively identified and adequately described. I am sure he would like to see a crowd of catalogers and literary researchers working hand in hand at this project, and to see it carried to completion. He has an important point at this time, because as time goes on our few remaining scholars of his kind are disappearing without replacement. Our kind of training for librarianship does not take this work into account, and I fear, as he does, that the idea will die. Perhaps here is another test for the versatility of our rapidly proliferating library schools. Perhaps they will meet this need.—*Jerrold Orne, Washington University Libraries, St. Louis.*

## Foundations of the Public Library

*Foundations of the Public Library; The Origins of the Public Library Movement in New England 1629-1855.* By Jesse H. Shera. Chicago, University of Chicago Press, 1949, 308p. \$5.00.

With the continued cultural and social development of the United States, it has benefited the public library, as an important social agency serving the needs of individual communities, to continually develop and broaden its horizons. The current trend toward increasing regionalization of libraries

calls for a backward look to the earliest public libraries to understand their development and growth in "economic and social terms" in leading to the present trend.

This book by Professor Shera, of the Graduate Library School, the University of Chicago, is a social history of the Public Library Movement in New England from 1629 to 1855. The author has done an intensive job of reaching back to the earliest New England backgrounds of this country's development to show the economic and social milieu up to the

point of definite urbanization, fitting into the pattern the private and company libraries, the town and parish libraries, the social libraries, and the desire for publicly sponsored educational facilities.

The contents of the libraries of the time are not dealt with to any great extent, but short tables offer comparative bases for noting the percentile divisions of the small collections into the various book categories. A consideration is also made of the early development of a form of special library among the social libraries which attempted to cater to the particular interests of its clientele. The aversion to fiction in the above mentioned collections also led to the early institution of the circulating library.

The author then traces the development of the public library through the steps toward municipal control, significance of the Boston Public Library, the beginnings of state legislation

to the causal factors in public library development. In this last, the effects of economic ability, desire of scholarship, historical research, and the urge for conservation, work with the feeling of local pride and the increasingly felt need for universal public education, the Lyceum movement and vocational needs, to the end of setting up the first public libraries.

Professor Shera proves his thesis of the library as a social agency whose functions are only definitely known when the goals of society are certain. With its excellent index, selective bibliography, documents, plates, and charts this work is a worthy contribution to the University of Chicago Studies in Library Science, and one which we can hope will lead to an extended historical study of library development in conjunction with the country's expansion.—*Harold L. Roth, Brooklyn Public Library.*

## Business Information

*Sources of Business Information.* By Edwin T. Coman, Jr. New York, Prentice-Hall, Inc., 1949, ix, 406p. \$6.00; to schools, \$4.50.

Many efforts have been made to solve the bibliographic problem of organizing and listing sources of business information, but this is the first attempt to offer a critical, running commentary on the whole range of business literature. It is a courageous undertaking. As a handbook it should be very useful to students in schools of business, and, in some ways, to businessmen. It is certainly aimed at both groups. Whether this double-barrelled firing will exactly hit either group is a question that Coman at some time must have asked himself. The field of business information is large, the sources varied and occasionally obscure, and the bibliographic control inadequate. Special librarians are acutely conscious of these facts and spend many hours, and collectively a great deal of money to organize their resources to fit the particular business they serve. They know, too, that piling up references, or otherwise embarrassing their employers with the wealth of literature ingeniously discovered is seldom appreciated. Two of the requirements they

have found are that the information supplied must exactly fit the particular need, and that it must be the latest.

To organize all business information for convenient use is a hopeless task. Either the coverage is broad, perhaps basic in some areas and superficial in others, or it is narrow and always shifting in time and boundary. Most bibliographies of business literature are merely handfuls of the swirling sands of fact and opinion. New facts or other theories make them vanish in the desert of the superseded.

Coman has chosen the broad coverage. In limiting his choice of materials to the basic, he has avoided the criticism of incompleteness in the areas he covers. He has handled these competently by careful selection and brief, critical and descriptive comment. Only one who has struggled with organizing for use the vast and sometimes exasperating types of business materials can appreciate the extraordinary task he undertook. There are some important areas, however, and types of informational sources he has neglected. For example, the geographic factor is only slightly touched upon in the section on foreign trade, although it is as important for